CALIFORNIA

'NINETY-SEVEN

Presbyterian Rally, Calvary
Church, San Francisco, Cal.
Thursday, July the eighth

FIRST AND LAST.

"MOST there now!"

A girl, who had been traveling wearily down the road, paused, as a square, many-windowed building stood revealed in the noon sunlight. She was dusty and travel worn, but her dull face brightened as she caught sight of the Mission school which was her goal. She shook the dust from her faded dress, straightened the sunbonnet upon her head, and sat down upon a stone by the wayside to put upon her bare feet a pair of well worn shoes, which she had prudently carried in her bundle lest the journey should prove too much for their endurance.

"I'm most there now," she repeated, as if there were many things in the past which that comforting assurance atoned for. Then, her efforts at making herself presentable being completed, she hastened forward again.

Her pleasure, unfortunately, was not shared by those in the building. A teacher, standing at an upper window, watched the approaching figure curiously at first, then with a growing recognition that brought a look of trouble into her eyes. She hurriedly called to a lady who was passing through the hall:

"Miss Grey, will you come here a moment, please? I believe that is 'Cretia."

"Oh, I hope not!" was answered earnestly, but, after a minute's careful scrutiny the added words came slowly, "Yes—it is."

The two teachers looked at each other in dismay, and the eyes of the first speaker filled with tears.

"She is coming back, poor child! And we can do nothing for her now. We are crowded almost beyond endurance, and we cannot take another."

'Cretia had been with them the previous year, painstaking but dull—a slow plodding girl who could not be considered a very promising pupil. She was penniless, with no friends to aid her, and, as it must be all charity, the teacher had sometimes questioned anxiously whether they were justified in using the church's money upon one from whom they could expect no higher return of usefulness. Such questions of economy seem awful when they relate to souls, but funds and room were limited, and even mission teachers cannot compass the impossible. So it had been in some measure a relief that 'Cretia did not return after the summer vacation.

Three weeks of the term had passed and she had almost dropped out of mind. Now here she was again, bundle in hand.

"I done—I hev come back, Miss Mary," she said, making a sudden effort to correct her language as the familiar atmosphere of the school brought back a remembrance of its teachings—"I did'nt get yere at first cause—*be*cause I stayed to earn some more money. Laws, but I worked hard all vacation! Yere 'tis, Miss Mary—twelve dollars."

She was untying a knot in an old handkerchief to exhibit her little hoard, and her fingers trembled with excitement.

"'Taint noways right to have all you'ns—you—gimme everything, an' I arned this."

The teacher's eyes had grown misty again; well she knew how few chances of employment these girls had, and how small a pittance the most toilsome labor would bring. She knew, too, the pressing needs of the daily life, and all the hardship and self-denial these savings represented. Her voice trembled as she spoke.

"But, 'Cretia, dear girl, we didn't know you were coming; we haven't any room for you now. I can't tell you how sorry I am to say it, but we have no place left."

'Cretia smiled contentedly.

"Oh, 'twont take much room for me, I reckoned you'd be about full. Anywhere's 'll do."

"But, child, there is no 'anywhere'—no place at all where I can put you. We are more than full," urged Miss Mary reluctantly. The admission of the last two pupils had been a case of heart against judgment, and the building had been crowded to its utmost limit.

Still 'Cretia smiled her slow smile. She had learned to look upon Miss Mary as a being who could plan a way out of any dilemma—one to whom everything was possible. But, when at last she understood, the light vanished from her eyes. She did not cry or utter any protest. A grey pallor crept over her face, she nervously fingered the faded folds of her dress, and then in a dazed, bewildered way tied up the earnings that had so failed of their purpose, and gathered up her bundle.

"Do not go yet, 'Cretia, stop and rest a while and have some dinner," urged the teacher kindly.

But the girl shook her head.

"'Pears like I ain't hungry, Miss Mary. I kin get back

to ma-am Swanzy's by night. I reckon I'll stay there till mornin'; it's nearder home."

She did not say she could not bear the pain of seeing others in the place she had thought was hers; that the merry voices that reached her from the halls and stairways were intolerable. She did not even consciously think it; she only knew that she wanted to get away and be alone.

The teacher dimly comprehended, and, remorseful for the grief she could not prevent, again explained how powerless she was to do otherwise, and once more expressed her own keen regret.

"I cannot tell you how sorry I am, 'Cretia, but you see I cannot help it."

"I aint noways blamin' nobody, Miss Mary. I 'low I'd better be goin'; it's mighty fur to walk."

The unconscious dropping into old expressions told how completely she felt herself barred out from new hopes and aspirations. Miss Grey watched the drooping young figure trudge away down the lonely road—away from the help and hope for which it had striven so bravely. Then she saw Miss Mary with tearful eyes pass silently to her own room. Miss Grey's black eyes were not tearful, they were flashing.

"How I wish," she said emphatically, "that I could transport those two big heartaches right into the middle of some great rich church at the North. Yes; I do."

'Cretia walked steadily on until a turn in the road had hidden her from observation and a strip of desolate woodland shut her in. Then she threw herself down beside a great tree, and bowed her head on her folded arms against its gnarled roots. It was late in the afternoon of the following day, when with weary lagging footsteps she reached her home—a little cabin in the valley. The door stood open,

revealing the dancing flames in a wide fire-place, and the figure of a woman silhouetted against it as she gazed at something on the hearth. She turned at sound of 'Cretia's step, but though she must have felt surprised at the girl's unexpected appearance, she did not express it.

"Yer back ag'in, 'Creshy?"

"Mammy, they couldn't take me, the school was plumb full."

There was a little catch in 'Cretia's breath as she spoke. Her eyes were sad and heavy, her whole bearing weary and dejected. The mother's eyes saw it all in one quick scrutinizing glance, but she made no comment. Language, like everything else in their lives, was scant and poor. She had never been able, indeed, to fully understand her daughter's awakened aspirations. After one year at the school 'Cretia had seemed to her a marvel whose acquirements she viewed with mingled pride and awe, and she could not in the least comprehend what the girl wanted of "more larnin'." She had not opposed her wishing and working, however, had even helped her after a fashion, but she did not know how to offer sympathy now.

"Twas a pow'rful long tromp for nothin'," she said. Then after a moment, with a little motherly resentment against something or somebody, she added: "'Pears like they might'a waited fur ye."

That was all. She busied herself with stirring up a cake of cornmeal and water, putting it on a board, and setting it up in front of the fire to bake. Then she fried a bit of bacon, and the evening meal was complete. It was eaten almost in silence, but afterward, sitting in the firelight with her Bible on her knee, 'Cretia found comfort. She came in her slow reading to the account of the beautiful city with its welcoming gates on every side; its gates that are not shut at

Young People's Department.

July 8th, 1897.

DEAR ENDEAVORER:

This is just a glimpse into *one* of our mission fields; there are many, many such which could be pictured for you; they are continually to be seen in each of our 114 mission schools among the Alaskans, Indians, Mexicans, Mormons and Mountaineers of the South, and in connection with the evangelistic work of preaching the gospel in the churches which are entirely or partially supported by the Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church.

To the young people of each Synod special work has been assigned. Do *you* know where *your* Home Mission Substitute is working? If not, will you find out and go home resolved to make your own C. E. Society an interested partner in the great work of redeeming our own land?

Your Presbyterial Secretary of Young People's Work can answer any questions you may wish to ask concerning your special objects, or you can obtain information by writing to The Young People's Department.

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Shall we not hear from you and have your aid and support?

M. KATHARINE JONES,

Secretary Young People's Department.

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